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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 000194

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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [ID](#) [KISL](#) [KJUS](#) [KPAO](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINS](#) [PNAT](#)
PTER
SUBJECT: CENTRAL SULAWESI: POLICE ATTACK LASKAR MUJAHIDDIN
STROQOLD

REF: JAKARTA 0152

Classified By: Political Officer Stanley Harsha for reasons
1.4 (b), (d)

1. (C) SUMMARY: Over 500 members of the Central Sulawesi police and Detachment 88 raided the Laskar Mujahiddin (LM) stronghold area of Gebang Rejo Subdistrict, Poso City, Central Sulawesi on the morning of January 22, 2007, resulting at the latest count in 16 dead, 18 injured and 24 captured LM members. Police confiscated hundreds of firearms, over 1,300 rounds of ammunition and 200 unused IEDs and active detonators from the raid. Central Sulawesi Police Chief Badrodin Haiti said a large group of LM members had amassed in Gebang Rejo from its networks in Central Sulawesi, bringing weapons and bombs and building defenses in the area. Our Muslim contacts in Poso and Palu unanimously expressed their opinion that it is incumbent on the police to minimize the number of innocent victims and collateral damage to maintain the fragile support of the Muslim community for their anti-terrorist operations. A prominent expert on Jemaah Islamiyah (JI) told us the jihad in Central Sulawesi is changing from revenge attacks on local Christians to a war on police, which could spread to other parts of Indonesia.
END SUMMARY

Police Raid Terrorist Held Village

2. (SBU) Over 500 members of the Central Sulawesi police and Detachment 88 raided the Laskar Mujahiddin (LM) stronghold area of Gebang Rejo Subdistrict, Poso City, Central Sulawesi on the morning of January 22, 2007, 11 days after a prior raid of two LM safe houses in the same village (See Ref.). Police again encountered fierce resistance in the form of small arms fire and thrown improvised explosive devices (IEDs) from an estimated 200 LM members at the scene. The gun battle lasted until approximately 5:00 p.m. local time and so far resulted in the deaths of 16 armed combatants and injuries to 18 others, two critically injured. One police officer was killed and three police and two bystanders were injured during the raid. Police netted 24 armed combatants who were arrested and sent for questioning. Police confiscated hundreds of firearms, over 1,300 rounds of ammunition and 200 unused IEDs and active detonators from the houses raided and the captured and dead combatants. Central Sulawesi police chief Badridin Haiti stated that over 100 IEDs were hurled at police by the combatants during the battle. Police had launched this raid in search of Laskar Mujahiddin members on a "most wanted" list of 29 terrorism

suspects that had escaped from the January 11 raid. A Central Sulawesi police spokesman also announced that nine of the dead and 19 of the captured combatants were on their most wanted list.

¶3. (SBU) Police have identified eight of the 11 dead combatants as: Om Gam, Idrus Asapa, Humah, Andreas Mahmud, Mohammed Sapri, Aprianto, Toto, Yusuf and Firmansyah, with three still unidentified. When we compare the names to the names on the most wanted list of 29, only Idrus Asapa is obviously on the list. The combatants often use aliases making it difficult to corroborate the police assertion that all on their list were all LM members. Indonesia's Metronews announced that two of the arrested combatants were on the most wanted list. Metronews also reported that three LM members surrendered January 23: Iswadi alias Is, Yasin alias Utomo, and Faizul alias Yakub. We can confirm only Yasin is on the most wanted list.

Jihadis From Region Rushing to Aid Poso Jihad

¶4. (SBU) In a nationally televised report on SCTV January 22, Haiti stated that LM supporters from around Central and South Sulawesi had been heading to Gebang Rejo since the January 11 raid. A large group of LM members had amassed in Gebang Rejo from its networks in Ampana, Parigi Mountong, Poso Pesisir, Malino and as far away as Central Java. He added that the LM supporters brought weapons and bombs with them, had built a command post and were doing other "disturbing things" in Gebang Rejo. Local police received numerous complaints from Gebang Rejo residents that LM had "taken over" the village. Since persuasive methods had not worked, police were compelled to "enforce the law" and raid the village. He said

the police had informed the village headman of the raid two days before in an effort to keep innocent victims to a minimum. Sidney Jones of the International Crisis Group (ICG) also told us that according to her sources that between January 11 and 22 LM supporters from as far away as the cities of Solo and Semarang in Jawa arrived to aid colleagues. There was no evidence of any foreign mujahiddin being involved, Jones said.

ConGen Contacts Concerned Over Local Reaction

¶5. (SBU) Our Muslim contacts in Poso and Palu unanimously expressed their opinion that it is incumbent on the police to minimize the number innocent victims and collateral damage to maintain the fragile support of the Muslim community for their anti-terrorist operations. Our Muslim contacts talk of the mixed feelings of many of the local Muslims toward the aggressive police actions. They say few local residents support the aims or methods of the Islamic radical groups in Central Sulawesi as defiling Islam; however some of the LM members, "educated" in the southern Philippines, hold respectable positions in the communities as Islamic religion teachers. Our contacts believe locals want to see LM leave their community but are angry at the violent and "crude" tactics being used by the police to force capitulation. They also said the swarm of police "invading" a Muslim village is also bringing back strong memories of the "Red Bats" Christian militias terrorizing and slaughtering local Muslims six years ago. "Police are not considering the feelings of the local people when they make these raids. Local people are upset the police are treating LM members like common thugs rather than continuing to negotiate for them to leave," stated Tasrif Siara, a journalist for Radio Nebula in Palu.

JI Links Possible

¶6. (C) Jones told us that in her view this event "is totally linked to JI." She said she believes the jihad in Central Sulawesi is changing from revenge attacks on local Christians to a war on police, and that this is attracting more followers. She explained that jihad on police, who are

perceived by the Muslim community to be unfairly attacking Muslims, is attractive to mujahiddin outside the Poso area and to inactive JI members, who are turned off by Nordin Top's tactic of attacking innocent people, but looking for an outlet to wage holy war against an unholy institution. This radical change in tactic attracted mujahiddin to Poso, she said, adding that she is worried that one consequence could be attacks on police outside the Poso area, citing Jakarta as one possible target. Police have no strategy for dealing with the public relations aspect of the raid, and the militants have a decided advantage in spinning the story in the media, Jones said.

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